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## THE ORIGIN OF THE WAR OF 1870.

THE appearance this year of General Lebrun's book, "Souvenirs Militaires," places the public for the first time in possession of information which had been the secret of the Cabinets. No serious contradiction of Lebrun's allegations has anywhere appeared, and their truth may be accepted, save so far as Italy is concerned. With regard to the position of Italy in 1870, we are still left to conjecture, if we have not secret means of information, for Lebrun's statements about Italy are unsupported by evidence, and in conflict with previous revelations.

When, in 1887, I mentioned \* the Archduke Albert's mission to Paris, and General Lebrun's mission to Vienna, my accuracy was, somewhat vaguely, contested in the introduction to the English edition of the Memoirs of Count Beust. General Lebrun then wrote that he would one day publish the engagements of Austria, and this has now been done.

We may wonder at the small amount of attention which has been attracted by Lebrun's volume, when we consider what passions raged a few years ago over the questions upon which it throws so brilliant a light. Book upon book used to appear on the bearings of 1866 upon 1870, and on the attitude of all the personages concerned in preparing for the greater war. No full, and therefore no truthful, revelation of facts which are essential to an accurate historical view has ever been made till this year, and when made this year—reducing, as it does, to waste paper most of what had been previously written on the subject—it passes almost unperceived.

\* "The Present Position of European Politics." By the author of "Greater Britain."

There can be no more interesting controversy in relation to the history of our times than that on the responsibilities for the war of 1870, and there certainly has never been a historical question on which the public has held, at short intervals, views more widely different. When the draft treaty about Belgium was issued in 1870, <sup>1871</sup> opinion, which had been halting as between the sides, pronounced itself fiercely against France. When afterwards the Duc de Gramont first privately circulated, and then published, the despatch of Count Beust of July 20, 1870, which showed that Austria had expressed her intention of co-operating with France, a feeling arose that perhaps Austria had tempted France into an alliance intended to undo the effects of 1866. Then came gradually to light a portion of the history of the Hohenzollern candidature, showing that this scheme was no new one in 1870, and suggesting that it had been prepared from a far earlier date, a revelation which left an uncomfortable feeling upon the public mind as to whether all men had been wrong in their previous judgment. Then came an interview with a journalist, in which Prince Bismarck seemed to take upon himself the whole burden of the war by declaring that he had altered a telegram for publication in such a way as to make war inevitable, though peace had been possible until that moment. A similar statement by Prince Bismarck had been twice previously published at Berlin, but had not attracted much notice in England or France. Now comes Lebrun, who shows that war had been carefully prepared by Austria and France for 1871, and who seems at first sight to justify Germany for taking steps in July, 1870, to prevent that postponement of a declaration of war until April or May, which, according to Lebrun, the Archduke Albert considered essential to the success of the Austrian arms in an anti-German war.

On, however, a fuller examination of all the circumstances of the case, that occurs which generally happens with regard to historical events, namely, that the impartial observer must come to an impartial view, and admit that the causes which were at work rendered war inevitable, and that in the minds of all those by whom war could be postponed or made its certainty was recognised. All through the Paris Exhibition, and

the meeting of Sovereigns and the series of peaceful speeches, Louis Napoleon knew, and the Emperor of Austria knew, and the King of Italy knew, and the Prussian Chancellor and Prussian Chief of the Staff knew, that war must come about soon. Each was trying to bring it about in such a fashion as to make it the most profitable or the least harmful to his country.

What is, then, the sequence of events from which this historical conclusion has to be deduced? As early as January 6, 1868, the French Ambassador at Berlin had written that Count Bismarck had resolved on uniting Germany under Prussian leadership, and would create an opportunity for carrying out that design, which the Chancellor was convinced he could not accomplish without war. Believing in the Prussian army to a degree in which perhaps no Prussian general believed in it, Bismarck, the Ambassador declared, looked forward to the certainty of that war promoting the success of his scheme. He had concluded, in 1866, treaties of alliance with the South German States, and the Chief of the Staff had prepared a plan of campaign against France, in which the numbers of the South German contingents and the precise use to be made of them were determined, and in which it was assumed that the war would be brought about under circumstances in which the French would find themselves without allies. In the meantime Count Manteuffel was sent to St. Petersburg to secure Russian neutrality, in return for a promise to support Russia in a denunciation of the Black Sea Treaty. After this General Ignatieff was sent to Berlin to promise the friendly attitude which had been asked for. \* The Prussian army had not done so well as it should have done in 1866, and immense pains were taken in the following year to make it adequate for its task. France had been exhausted by the Mexican campaign, and for internal reasons was specially desirous of peace. A scheme was prepared for the reduction of the active army, and nothing was done towards the preparation for war of the principal reserve, which, after its legislative creation, continued to exist upon paper only. In April, 1868, the Chief of the Prussian Staff walked over the whole of the common frontier of France and of the Bavarian Palatinate—

the country on which the concentration of the hostile armies took place two years and a quarter afterwards; and he prepared at that time the memorandum freely quoted in the Prussian official history of the war—a memorandum which exactly foretold the numbers which the French would be able to put in the field, what they would attempt to do with them, and how they would be outnumbered, cut off from Paris, and driven on to the Belgian frontier. Professor Bluntschli held in 1868 a conversation with the North German Chancellor, in which Count Bismarck told him that France could place on the frontier not more than 300,000 men; that Germany could meet her “with double, and more,” of equal quality; that Austria would be neutral, as the Magyars were aware that “a victorious Austria would deprive Hungary of her Constitution,” while in Italy, though the King might be personally bound to Louis Napoleon, all danger was over, as a Ministry hostile to Germany could not in future be formed. All through 1868 General Ducrot was writing from Strasburg to General Frossard, and keeping the French Court exactly informed as to the military preparations of Prussia. In October, 1868, he wrote that Madame de Pourtalès, returning from Berlin, had just told him how one of the Prussian Ministers had assured her that by the early summer of 1870 Alsace would be Prussian. It is clear from the terms of this letter that Moltke had held similar language, and the prophecy is remarkable when we remember that it is contained in documents which were in the Tuileries, and that they did not leave the palace until September 4, 1870, having been under lock and key for nearly two years before the prophecy was accomplished.

Already, in 1868, the Hohenzollern candidature had been foreseen. Queen Isabella had been driven from her throne and country by an insurrection; Serrano was Regent, but Prim (Minister of War and Prime Minister) had the crown in his pocket. Prince Leopold, an elder brother to Prince Charles of Roumania, married to a Portuguese princess, had been from the first moment of Prim’s dictatorship talked of for the Spanish throne. The French Republicans, including a historian of high standing—M. Jules Simon,—and M. Jules Favre (the latter writing just after having for five months acted as French

Minister for Foreign Affairs, with, I presume, the documents at his command), have maintained that Prim was alone responsible for the Hohenzollern candidature. On the other hand, the Ministers of Napoleon III. never ceased to declare that the Hohenzollern candidature was purposely set on foot by Prussia as a cause of a war in which the German Empire was to be re-constructed. The Ministers of the discredited Government of France were, and are, interested parties. One cannot but feel, in making up one's mind on this important point of modern history, that M. Jules Favre ought to have had the whole of the secret papers of the French Foreign Office in his mind. Still, Comte de Chaudordy, who had been the chief (as we should say) "permanent" official of the French Foreign Office, and who had the same sources of information—perhaps better used—differed from M. Jules Favre, although M. de Chaudordy is not an Imperialist in politics. Just as French Ministers may have been influenced on the one side, so M. Jules Favre and his Republican friends may have been influenced on the other, without knowing it, by their speeches made in the Corps Législatif before the facts were in their possession, and by that desire to attain to an unattainable consistency which leads politicians into many errors.

At all events, in 1868 it was evident to every clear-sighted observer, that before long the King of Prussia would be made into a German Emperor, and that this meant war; and the Ducrot letters go to show that the very date had been settled in advance. The French Ambassador at Berlin, whatever may have been his errors, undoubtedly pointed out to his bewildered Emperor that he must not count on the existence of any minority in Germany; that however unprovoked the war might be by France, it would be so brought about that Germany "would regard it as a war of aggression by France against the Fatherland," and that in the day of victory "the demands of Germany would know no limits." It was, too, in 1868 that the Queen of Holland—who under the Second Empire was looked upon as an intellectual Queen of Sheba to Louis Napoleon's Solomon, but who perhaps deserved the name of Solomon more than her Imperial friend—had tried to show Napoleon III. that the interest of Prussia pointed to the finding

of a pretext for war, in which France might be made to appear to be the aggressor. Like Ducrot's letters, some of the Queen's letters were in the Tuileries, and were published by the Government of National Defence. It was in backing up the friendly remonstrances of the Queen of Holland, that the French Ambassador pointed out that the only considerations which told against the certainty of a war were considerations which the action of Prussia towards Denmark, and towards Austria, showed were not to be counted upon, for the King was less likely to hold out against a national demand for a war with France, than he had been to hold out against a more limited demand for a war with Austria, which in 1866 he had been unable successfully to resist.

No doubt the King was sincere when he told the Emperor of the French in 1868 that he had decided to maintain the then existing state of things in Germany, and that he was resolved upon a permanent peace. At the same time, he knew the necessity for the active military preparations of his country, which were at that time being rapidly pushed on. He could not be safe against the changing moods and against the domestic necessities of Napoleon III. ; but if the policy of disarmament, which at one moment attracted Louis Napoleon, had been maintained without a check in public and in private, it would have been difficult for the military advisers of the King of Prussia to cause him to consent to war, and so it would if at the last the French Ministry had been unanimously and firmly desirous of maintaining a peace for which alone their previous action had prepared.

Before we reach the events of the early part of 1870, in a historical survey of the facts, it should be remembered that Prussia had the North German armies ready up to the end of 1871, without the necessity of obtaining votes in supply ; the numbers and the cost of the armies having been fixed by the North German federal constitution for a term of years. After 1871 the military budgets were to be voted by the Parliaments, so that war, if it was to be produced by Prussian action, was evidently to be expected not later than 1871—that is to say, in 1870—upon the ordinary principle of having a year in hand to spare. Doubtless it was this fact which had not escaped the attention



of those who had been the informants of General Ducrot, of Madame de Pourtalès, of the Queen of Holland, and of the French Ambassador.

One policy or the other should clearly have been pursued by France in face of circumstances of great and obvious danger—a policy of peace or a policy of war. Perhaps the alternatives should be expressed as a policy of peace, strengthened by alliances in view of defensive war; or a policy of war. Divided counsels led to their customary results. Louis Napoleon so far believed the pacific assurances given to him by the King as not to reorganise his military forces, and not to make sound inquiry into the military forces of Prussia, and to discredit the accurate reports sent home by the French military attaché, by the ambassador, and by the general commanding upon the frontier. On the other hand, in 1869, with an extraordinary infirmity of purpose, seeking to obtain from other powers the military strength which, if war was to be undertaken, he ought in the first place to have acquired for his own country, the Emperor entered into negotiations with Austria with a view to aggressive war. It was not at the original suggestion of Austria, nor even of that Beust on whose not very strong shoulders so many mistakes of other, not stronger, men have from time to time been laid, that the Archduke Albert came to Paris at the beginning of March, 1870. The "letters exchanged" by the French and Austrian emperors in 1869 were exchanged on the initiative of the Emperor of the French, or else the contrary would have been stated by Gramont when he first quoted the phrase and used it against Beust.

The Austrian despatches which have been published by Lebrun show what was the nature of the discussions which, arranged for in January and February, took place at the commencement of March, 1870. What is public is that, in May, Lebrun was sent by the French Emperor personally to Vienna, and it is a well-known and published fact, though he does not name it, that he went by way of Berlin with the foolish intention of throwing off their guard the well-informed spies of Prussia. If no one about the Austrian Court, and if no one about Napoleon III. informed Berlin of the Archduke's conversations and of Lebrun's mission—a somewhat violent supposition—the Italians

were more or less consulted, and the Italians were already the virtual allies of Prussia, although they were supposed by Napoleon III. at that time to be his. Facts which are known in Italy have an awkward way of being known elsewhere. But, as the statesman who was at the time Hungarian Minister-President and Defence Minister has claimed credit for having prevented Beust from plunging Austria into war on behalf of France, it is certain that whether or not the Germans heard of the terms of the alliance from Paris or from Rome, or from Vienna, they had hints from Pesth. In Italy the Minister Minghetti was as bitterly opposed to the French alliance as was, in Hungary, Andrassy, and had the same motive for giving information at Berlin. Count Bismarck's conversation with Professor Bluntschli in 1868, quoted above, makes it clear that such information from the Italian and the Hungarian Ministries was expected at Berlin, and the King of Italy, who was an able man, must have known this, while the Austro-Hungarian Chancellor ought to have known it. He received a high Prussian Order on his fall, after the war, but whether for treachery towards France, or for stupidity, is not clear.

Lebrun shows that plans were completed at Vienna in May, 1870, for the invasion of Germany by the whole armies of France and Austria, and by 100,000 Italians, although the Archduke assumed that Italy would place her whole forces, and not merely a contingent, at the disposal of the allies. The French were to menace the Palatinate with the greater portion of their army, while the Austrians, with French and Italian contingents of 100,000 each, were to march into the south of Germany and detach the Southern States from the Northern alliance. The Archduke was assured by Lebrun, on the most recent information supplied to him by the French War Office, that the French could cross the frontier in fifteen days after mobilisation with 400,000 men. Basing himself upon the experience of 1866, and not allowing, as the General Staff at Vienna should have allowed, for the military reforms of Prussia made from 1867 to 1870, the Archduke assumed that the Prussians would be unable in thirty days to place in line so large an army as the French alone. Austria, while she overrated the military power of France, and

ridiculously underestimated the numbers of the Prussians, was well aware of her own deficiencies. The Austrian mobilisation would take forty-two days, and Austria, terrified at the fear of being left, by an arrangement between the principals, France and Prussia, to bear the brunt of the whole war, would not promise to declare war on the same day as France. Austria would only commence her mobilisation on the day of the French declaration of war. The Archduke stipulated that the declaration of war should be not later in the year than in the month of May, or, in other words, not later than the spring of 1871, so that the allies should have the summer before them; and military reasons were given by the Austrian Generalissimo why a declaration of war as late in the year as July would be fatal to all chance of success on the Austrian side. It is known that Louis Napoleon had proposed a simultaneous declaration of war for the 1st July, 1870, which Austria had refused, and that Denmark, as well as Italy, was at that time expected to have joined him. Does it not follow, almost as a certainty, that the Germans were acquainted with the facts which were patent to the Archduke Albert and to the Emperor of Austria, although not clear to the misty intelligence of Napoleon III.? It became at least the interest of Prussia to anticipate the war, arranged for April, 1871, by again forcing on the Spanish candidature in such a way as to drive the French in 1870 into a war in which France would certainly be deserted by her allies.

In March, 1870, Lord Odo Russell was instructed by Mr. Gladstone's first Administration to sound the Prussian Government as to the possibility of disarmament, and this confidential agency was undertaken at the request of the Emperor of the French. Considering the conferences with the Archduke Albert which were going on at that very moment, something might be said about duplicity and about the unfairness to our Government of making them a catspaw under the circumstances described. Not only did Prussia—evidently well-informed—absolutely refuse to entertain the question of disarmament, but in June the King of Prussia met the Emperor of Russia, and personally renewed to his nephew the assurances which had already been made in his name, and which secured Russian neutrality in the war about to come.

Nothing can be more foolish than the belief, which was long entertained by well-informed men, that the Hohenzollern candidature was an accidental bolt which fell in 1870 from a clear sky. The Spanish Minister at another Court, who had formerly been the Spanish Minister at Berlin, had paid a sudden visit to Berlin in 1869, and had been closeted with the Prussian Minister. This Spanish diplomatist was the confidential friend of Prim; and the facts were known at Paris. The French Ambassador has stated that he was ordered by his Government to ask point blank whether the Spanish diplomatist had been sent for with a view of the resuscitation in 1869 of the Hohenzollern candidature. The Ambassador was assured by an Under-Secretary that no such discussion had taken place; but the secrets of empires are not always told to permanent officials. The Emperor of the French informed the German Government in 1869, and again early in 1870, that a Hohenzollern candidature for the throne of Spain would be looked upon in France as directed against that country. In May, 1870, the Prussian Government admitted that the Hohenzollern candidature had been discussed with the King and with the father of Prince Leopold. It was clear that Prussia intended to keep alive the chance of getting a Hohenzollern prince elected by the Cortes, without binding herself as to the course which she would then take, thus having on hand a difficulty which might form at any moment a cause of war. At the same time, language was used so pacific as to allow of withdrawal if the time did not serve, and such as to put the French, should they take offence, as far as possible in the wrong. In June, 1870, after the meeting of the King of Prussia with the Emperor of Russia, another visit of the Spanish diplomatist to Berlin took place, and the candidature of Prince Leopold again began to be mentioned in the press.

It has always been admitted on both sides that Prince Leopold did not intend to accept the crown of Spain without the consent of his father and that of the King. On July 3, 1870, Prince Leopold did accept it. Had, then, his father and the King consented, and consented knowing that consent made war probable, where previously they had refused? That they had been consulted and had consented was admitted by

the King at Ems, and this in itself was a provocation towards France, after the language which had been held by France in 1869. Great importance was attached in July, 1870, and an altogether exaggerated importance has been attached since that time by those who have written on the origin of the war, to the question of a general promise for the future. This question was not new. In 1869 the King of Prussia had replied to France that, while he thought the candidature unwise, no general assurance could be given, for that assurance for the future had been asked.

By the statements of the King of Prussia himself on July 12, it is pretty clear that the Hohenzollern candidature of 1870 was to have been kept secret until the Cortes were actually met, and was to have been carried through in a single day. Possibly the intention was to compromise Spain with France in such a manner that France would have to watch the Pyrenees with a large force at the beginning of the war. But to have pressed a Hohenzollern candidature to the end would have been to cause a war in which the sympathies of Europe would have been with France, in which Prussia would have seemed to be the aggressor, and a war in which it was doubtful whether Bavaria would join. It is clear that in 1870 it was not seriously intended that Prince Leopold should become King of Spain. While it was intended to withdraw him, he was to be withdrawn in such a way as to wound the Government of France, and to lead France to declare, in spite of the withdrawal, a war in which it would be possible to represent, to South Germany and to Europe, France as being the aggressor. The revival of the candidature was so sudden that even the Regent of Spain, the Spanish Ambassador in Paris, and the Spanish Minister at Berlin were not in the secret, and they, all of them, denied the truth of the rumour even after July 3, on which day its truth was admitted by Prim. It is possible that the King of Prussia personally, and alone, thought that if the Cortes suddenly proclaimed Prince Leopold king, France would be unable to interfere against a distinct and unanimous wish of the Spanish nation, and in opposition to the most cherished view in favour of the rights of nationalities held by the Emperor. If France

did interfere, Austria was not ready; Italy had promised Prussia neutrality, even if she had promised France alliance, for Prussia virtually could, and France could not, give her Rome, and Spain and Germany would be too strong for France. There was also in hand the famous draft treaty about Belgium, and another string to the Prussian bow in the chance of a revolution in Paris, had the Emperor given way—a revolution in protest against a national humiliation. Such a revolution would equally have suited the Prussian view, as it would have allowed, as much as a successful war, the union of Southern and Northern Germany under the King of Prussia as German Emperor. This, of course, and not the Spanish crown, was what Germany wanted.

A wise French Foreign Minister who desired peace would have sent the telegram which was actually sent by the French Foreign Office to Berlin on July 3, after it was known that a deputation sent by Prim had, with the previous consent of Prince Leopold, offered him the throne of Spain. It was a pacific telegram, not stronger than the circumstances warranted. But a wiser minister than Gramont would not have sent the ambassador to Ems, and would merely have declared in dignified language that France could not tolerate a Prussian King of Spain. The candidature would in all probability have failed. In the meantime war preparations could have been made. France could have pointed to her own conduct in 1830, when the Belgians had chosen the Duc de Nemours for King, and his father had refused to allow him to accept the throne.

Difficulties had, indeed, been thrown in the way of France taking any other course than that which would have been, in fact, the wisest. Not only was the King of Prussia at a watering place, but Count Bismarck was at the obscurest of his country homes, Prince Leopold was in Switzerland, and the Prussian Ambassador in Paris had applied for leave on the day on which the news from Spain was to arrive. The inevitable Under-Secretary at the Prussian Foreign Office "knew nothing of the matter," which concerned "the King alone." The Prussian official position suddenly became to treat the matter as concerning only Spain and Prince Leopold or his family, and no one else. The Prussian Ambassador in London told Lord Gran-

ville, as is recorded in a despatch from the latter to Lord Lyons, that the Prussian Government did not intend to mix itself up in the matter, and that the Prussian representatives had received orders to refuse to discuss it. The action of Prussia was condemned by the foreign newspapers for a week after the announcement of the candidature, and all sympathies were with France; but in less than ten days, through the mistakes of France, this attitude was changed.

On July 7, the French Ambassador was sent to Ems to ask the King to advise the Prince to withdraw his acceptance of the crown. The mission was a risky one; yet this success was virtually won. Not content with a diplomatic victory and with general sympathy, Gramont forgot his own declaration that if the King of Prussia gave the assurance asked for, he would secure the peace of Europe. He went to work to show the King that he had not secured the peace of Europe, and, setting all Europe against him by his insistence, asked for more than the King could possibly have been induced to grant. From this moment war was certain; and this war was brought about by the action of those round Napoleon III., who desired without having prepared for war. De Gramont denied at the time that he had won his success, and denied it in order to justify the ultimate declaration of war. The essence of the matter was in the withdrawal of the candidature, and although, no doubt, the withdrawal was not obtained through public action on the part of the King, yet it was approved by the King, who communicated his approval, and, in the case of a country which did not wish for war, this, to use our modern phrase, would have been "good enough."

The publications of Gramont and Benedetti have made clear the subsequent facts, down to and including the meeting of the French Cabinet at which the mobilisation order was withdrawn. There are the greatest differences of opinion as to what the facts mean, and as to what might have been, or as to policy; but the facts themselves are beyond all cavil. The Ambassador has told us that he obtained from the King exactly what he was told to obtain. The Minister for Foreign Affairs has told us that he was to obtain more, namely the initiative of the King to insist on the withdrawal. The words of his despatches

bear out this view, but the words are ill-chosen words, and what his colleagues must have meant, as reasonable men, was what the Ambassador understood—the spirit, and not the letter. There was a private letter from Gramont to Benedetti which accompanied the despatch of July 7, and which was far more warlike in tone than the despatch, because far more tenacious as to form. France was under constitutional government—the latest experiment of the moment—and it is not proved that the colleagues of Gramont, who were most of them for peace, saw this letter, and if they did they probably did not grasp (as men untrained in diplomacy and in the ways of Courts would naturally fail to grasp) the danger of war which lay within its insistence upon form. The Ministry doubtless thought, to use the Ambassador's words, that what was wanted was “the withdrawal of the candidature with the acquiescence of the King.”

The tone of the King of Prussia, though courteous, was irritating to the French. The King had approved the candidature; he admitted this, and yet declared that he left the Prince his freedom in the matter, which was known to be a mere form of speech. Still it is impossible to escape the fact that, so peaceful was the King, in spite of the Archduke and of Lebrun, war could have been avoided if the war party at Paris had been satisfied with that which France had obtained. The Prince had withdrawn his acceptance on the private advice and with the public approval of the King; and European sympathy was forfeited when France made war on the refusal of her demand for public advice and initiative. The Ambassador's words of the King were that he “intends to conform to our view, leaving, however, the initiative to the Prince . . . in order to avoid a concession to us which would be harshly judged in Germany.” A trap had perhaps been laid for France, but if so, she entered it, though aware of what she was doing. The King was irritated, as all Germany was irritated, at Gramont's last words in the French ministerial declaration. It is possible that there were those who reckoned on that irritation, yet, owing to the personal wish of the King for peace, France had obtained, in spite of her mistakes, all that she could with wisdom ask.

It is to be supposed that Gramont and his friends, and the



War Minister of France and his, and the secret advisers, desired war in order to strengthen the dynasty. Knowing, however, what Lebrun tells us about Austria and her distinct refusal to take part in a war earlier than April, 1871, it seems incredible that the French War Office should have thought the result of a war certain. De Gramont had been Ambassador at Vienna up to April, 1870. He had become Foreign Minister in May, when Lebrun was at Vienna. He had, perhaps, not read the notes of the Archduke's conversations with Lebrun, and he had other reasons for believing that, even in 1870, Austria would take the field. Lebrun proves that Gramont ought to have known better. It is said that war was forced upon the Government of France by the war-feeling in the country. The *Préfets* were consulted, and reported that the country was for peace. M. Jules Simon, who was afterwards Prime Minister, and who knows the machinery of the French police, has expressed his belief that the war manifestations which took place in Paris were paid for. The Emperor was in miserable health, and even more than usually unable to make up his mind. On July 10, according to Benedetti, who has not been contradicted on the point, Gramont, fighting against his colleagues, and on behalf of war, telegraphed to his Ambassador to write him a despatch bringing out those facts named above, which go to show that there was a secret plot for the Hohenzollern candidature, and which tell for war. He sent Count Daru to his Ambassador with the words, "We are only waiting for your despatch to call out 300,000 men." The warlike despatches of Gramont crossed the Prussian Ambassador, sent back to Paris by the King to assure the French Ministry of his wish for peace. At the same time Gramont sent another despatch to his Ambassador censuring him for over-moderation. But on the same day on which this warlike despatch was received, July 12, Benedetti received a peaceful telegram from the Ministry. No doubt Gramont's friends are able to point to the admission by the King of Prussia on July 12 of the nature of the secret agreement between Prim and Prince Leopold, of which the King had been informed. But there are times when it is better to shut your eyes, and this was such a moment for France.

On July 12 Clément Duvernois, whether inspired by the war party or by some foreign agency, or merely by the wish to be disagreeable to a Ministry which he had helped to form but had not befriended, gave a notice in the Corps Législatif insisting on guarantees from Prussia for the future. At the mere sight of this question the French Government, who would undoubtedly have found in the Lower House a majority in favour of a prudent policy, and who could have obtained a majority in the Senate had they been strongly backed by the Emperor in the peaceful course on which, by their telegram of two o'clock, they had already entered, lost their heads. From this moment France officially declared herself no longer satisfied with that which would have satisfied her before the words of the question had been seen. France now asked for a guarantee for the future such as it was known that the King of Prussia could not grant, and would be backed to the point of war by German opinion, and by the approval of Europe, in refusing. On the 13th the French Government received the reply to their peaceful telegram in the form of a message from the King to say that, as King of Prussia, he approved the withdrawal, and wished his approval communicated. This same afternoon there occurred an interview between Gramont and the Prussian Ambassador, in which the French Minister suggested various forms of what were called in Germany "Letters of Apology." Nothing could have been conceived more likely to force the King of Prussia into hot approval of the war. For those who have carefully considered the Hohenzollern incident of 1869, and who compare the position at that time taken by Prussia with the position of the King in 1870, there is nothing startling in the words suggested by the French; but the European public of 1870 knew nothing of the events or of the negotiations of 1869, and to them the French demand of a promise for the future seemed insolent and nothing more.

Had the French Empire in reality adopted constitutional forms war would not at this moment have come about. In a constitutional country none of the despatches in so grave a matter could have gone without consideration by the Cabinet, with the result that each new phase of the negotiations would

have lasted two days instead of two hours, and peace would have been preserved. France, however, was still, in 1870, in external affairs, a kind of muddled despotism under Parliamentary and constitutional forms.

It may be said that the Hohenzollern candidature had appeared twice already, and might appear for a third time. The Cortes might still select Prince Leopold, who might come before them in spite of his father's refusal in his name; but after the renunciation by the father, backed by the King, both "as head of the House of Hohenzollern and as King of Prussia," France could then have directly intervened in Spain without addressing remonstrances to Prussia, and no one can believe that Bavaria and Würtemberg would have joined Prussia in war in such a cause, while Austria, in the following year, would have been less likely to stand aloof.

The last interview of the Ambassador with the King on the 13th produced the telegram from the King, which, cut down and placarded as cut down, caused a storm of patriotic excitement throughout Germany. But, as has been seen, it is impossible to ascribe the war to this one event, or to allot blame for that war by reference to this one fact alone.

If the French Government meant to fight it would perhaps have done better, in spite of Mexico, to have fought in an earlier year. Sufficient ground for war might have been found in the non-observance by Prussia of the promises made as to the retrocession to Denmark of Northern Schleswig, and as to the independent international position of the South German States—promises which had been made to France herself. The Luxemburg affair had offered another opportunity in 1867. Since that time Prussia had armed, France had proposed disarmament through Lord Clarendon; and, although Prussia had peremptorily refused to disarm, France had rather entered upon a policy of disarmament than upon preparation for war. On the other hand, the hesitating, unstable Emperor had sought, and thought that he had obtained, alliances for attack on Prussia, and must be held responsible for not preventing Gramont from giving a turn to negotiations which played into the hands of the enemies of France. France might have fought in 1866, or at such a time after 1866 as she found best,

or she might have kept the peace ; but the worst of all possible policies was to allow herself to be dragged into war in 1870 at the moment selected by her foes.

If either side had seriously desired peace, the offer of the other Powers to secure it might have been useful. On July 13 the Russian Ambassador at the Court of St. James called on Lord Granville and suggested a protocol in which the Powers would have declared the satisfaction with which they had learnt the withdrawal of the candidature of the Prince of Hohenzollern. The idea, which was a good one, was not actively taken up by anyone upon the Continent, and when Baron Brunnow returned to Lord Granville on the 18th it was too late.

On July 14 the peace party triumphed at a Cabinet at Paris, for it was decided to stop the calling out of the reserves and to inform both Chambers on the 15th that the withdrawal of the candidature was accepted, and that in the event of a revival of it in the future an appeal would be made to all the Powers. The Emperor was present. It was on the same evening that the supplement of *The North German Gazette* was circulated which led to the demonstrations at Berlin at night ; and in the night the decision was taken at Paris to proceed with the preparation for war. The Duc de Gramont has stated that it was decided on the 15th that the orders of the Minister of War should not be countermanded. Now the orders were given on the 14th, and they were countermanded on the 14th. Gramont suggests that the French Cabinet met a second time on the 14th. M. Delord, the historian, says that the Cabinet met at 10 p.m., but no authority confirms this statement, which is, I am confident, untrue. Who then, reversed the pacific decision at which it had taken the Cabinet six hours to arrive ? The declaration made to the Chambers on July 15 states that the reserves were called out on the 14th. These declarations, which produced a state of virtual war, were nominally based on a telegram from Count Bismarck to the Prussian agents. An English blue-book shows that on July 18 Prince Bismarck denied that the paragraph from *The North German Gazette* telegraphed by him to his agents was to be communicated to the foreign Cabinets, but it was so communicated, as we know, in Switzerland and at London. The curious fact, however, is,

that the action of the French Government in reversing the demobilisation order is defended by reference to facts most of which only happened on the next day, and none of which were known until the next day. The declarations of the French Cabinet being based on Count Bismarck's telegram to the Prussian agents, the French Opposition, through the mouths of Thiers and Gambetta, asked for the telegram ; but the French Government had only heard of it, and were obliged to make use of their majority to vote down the motion, for they had at the moment no copy of this despatch upon which they based their entrance upon war.

The greatest of the follies of the war party in France was that with which they accepted the pleasant statements of the King of Italy, and of the Austrian Chancellor. Italy was afraid of a French success, and of eventual conflict with France upon the Roman question. But it was obviously impossible for Italy to help France unless France let her take Rome, and it was impossible for the French clergy to allow the sick Emperor to withdraw the French troops from Italian soil. If Russia had foreseen that Germany would crush France she might have meant something by her fair words, for she could not desire to see the balance of power overthrown and Germany made all-powerful ; but Russia doubtless looked forward to a long and exhausting conflict, and she undoubtedly had a clear understanding with North Germany. Had Austria really armed, and the war dragged on without a marked success, Russia was prepared to also arm, and to keep Austria quiet. In the event of overwhelming victory by the French the Austrian forces would have taken the field on the French side, for the purpose, doubtless, of claiming a share of the spoil.

Although the Archduke's condition of postponement of war till April or May had not been fulfilled, and although Beust had sent round a despatch dated July 11 in which he washed his hands of France, yet this despatch was only meant for future publication and to guard against the risk of Prussian victories. It was carefully kept from French eyes. Count Vitzthum was sent to Paris with half promises that Austria would join, and on his return to Vienna, Beust wrote to

Gramont (July 20): "Faithful to our engagements, as laid down in the letters exchanged last year between our Emperors, we consider the cause of France our own, and will, as far as possible, contribute to the success of her arms." Vitzthum then went back to Paris with fresh promises. On the 24th Austria stated that she could not take the field till September. The statement that a treaty of alliance was signed at Paris between July 24 and 31 is probably untrue, and, in any case, Austria did not arm, and Prussia trusted her sufficiently to leave no troops upon her frontier.

It is unfortunate for the historian that one of the authorities which is likely to be used, unless protest is made against its accuracy, is the British blue book which contains documents sent round after the declaration of war by Prussia to the neutral Powers for the purpose of proving that France was the sole aggressor. We are made, for instance, to publish the fact that the Hohenzollern candidature was not known to the Prussian Government. Now the King, in conversations which have been published by Benedetti, admitted the contrary, and there is no sort of doubt upon the matter. The candidature may not have been known to the permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, but if so, that is because he shut his ears and eyes.

What results from a detailed examination of the facts? That, if we neglect those which tell one way in favour of those which tell the other, it is possible to make an overwhelming case on either side. By stating nothing except what is to the letter true, it is possible to prove at will either that France or that Germany was the aggressor. The fact for the impartial mind remains that war between these rival Powers was brewing from 1866; that on the side of Germany there was steady and able preparation for a conflict which was seen to be inevitable, while on the other side there was hesitation which could lead to but one ultimate result.

CHARLES W. DILKE.



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